

September 23, 2021

Dear Washington Central Community,

Happy Fall!

This week 537 students and staff members participated in voluntary COVID-19 surveillance testing. That is 100 more participants than last week! Surveillance testing is available for students ages 5 and up and takes place each Monday. It takes about 5 minutes to complete [the virtual consent form](#), and parents/guardians only need to complete it one time for the entire school year.

Last week we asked families of children ages 12 and up to complete [this vaccine attestation form](#). As of yesterday, we have received forms for 240/754 students. Please complete the form as soon as possible and return it, along with a photo or copy of your child's vaccination card or immunization record, to covidvaccine@u32.org. If you need or prefer a hard copy of the form, please call your school's main office to request one. As I wrote last week, families may decline to provide this information. In these cases, students will be treated as unvaccinated individuals and will be required to follow the VT Department of Health quarantine requirements accordingly.

Since I wrote to you last week, we have had 11 more positive COVID-19 cases that have impacted our schools; 2 have impacted U-32 and 9 have impacted Berlin Elementary School. All close contacts were notified in a timely manner. We've had 20 confirmed positive cases in our district so far this year. As you know, the delta variant is highly contagious, and Washington County continues to experience a high transmission rate. We are enacting health and safety protocols in our schools to mitigate the risk of transmission, and we also strongly urge community members to follow precautions when our students are not in school. The VT Department of Health recommends [the following prevention strategies](#): Getting the COVID-19 vaccine, staying home when sick, washing hands, taking care when getting together, wearing a mask, and considering travel plans. We all need to do our part to keep our students safe and in school.

In non-COVID news, yesterday 8 of our U-32 students were featured on an episode of Vermont Edition that focused on the teaching of race and racism in schools. You can access the podcast [here](#). I listened to the segment yesterday and can't wait to listen to it again. My key takeaways are that the students who were interviewed want and need to learn more. They want us educators to support them and to dive deeply into hard history and multiple perspectives. They appreciate what has been done, and they acknowledge that it is not nearly enough yet. Their voices are strong! I believe we need

to listen to them, and I am grateful for their willingness to share their stories with the broader community.

Finally, earlier this week Shelley Vermilya, our WCUUSD equity scholar-in-residence, shared a [blog post](#) entitled *When I Am Tired* with me. In it, Lucinda Garthwaite, Director of the Institute for Liberatory Innovation, writes about the importance of balancing urgency with slowing down and reminds us that taking care of ourselves is essential if we are going to take care of each other and make the world a better place for everyone. Her words resonated with me, and I am working hard to achieve a better balance in order to do my best work in service to our school community.

Warmly,

Jen Miller-Arsenault
Interim Superintendent